

## Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 TEL AV 09529 271339Z  
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W  
-----093443 271342Z /64  
O 271240Z JUL 78  
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4459  
INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE  
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T TEL AVIV 9529

EXDIS

JERU FOR ATHERTON

E. O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PEPR PBOR SOPN EG IS US  
SUBJ: MEETING WITH PM BEGIN JULY 26

REF.: (A) STATE 188244, (B) CAIRO 17690

SUMMARY: BEGIN IS PLEASED WITH SCENARIO FOR SECRETARY'S TRIP  
AND PROPOSED MEETING AT SFM, WHICH HE PROMISED TO KEEP QUIET  
ABOUT FOR TIME BEING. HIS PHYSICAL CONDITION IS GLOWING;  
BETTER THAN I HAVE SEEN HIM IN OVER A YEAR. HE IS RESTRAINING  
HIMSELF FROM COUNTERING SADAT'S PERSONAL ATTACKS, BUT MAY NOT  
DO SO MUCH LONGER IF THEY CONTINUE. END SUMMARY

1. I SAW BEGIN ALONE AT HIS RESIDENCE FOR ABOUT FORTY-FIVE  
MINUTES LATE IN THE AFTERNOON OF WEDNESDAY, JULY 26. WE  
TALKED INITIALLY ABOUT HIS OBVIOUS RETURN TO EXUBERANTLY  
GOOD HEALTH; HE IS NOW ENJOYING THE MOST ENERGY AND BEST APPARENT  
HEALTH IN THE FOURTEEN MONTHS THAT I HAVE KNOWN HIM. HE IS A  
GOOD DEAL MORE RELAXED AND VIGOROUS, WITH A SLIGHTLY DEEPER  
VOICE AND CONSIDERABLE EXUBERANCE AND SENSE OF HUMOR. HE SAID  
THAT UITE HONESTLY HE HAD SUFFERED A GREAT DEAL FROM THREE  
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ATTACKS OF THE INFLAMMATION OF THE HEART LINING DURING THE PAST  
YEAR WHICH LEFT HIM VERY WEAK WITH NO APPETITE WHATSOEVER.  
NOW THAT HE HAS RECOVERED FROM THE LATEST OF THESE (WHICH  
APPARENTLY TOOK PLACE SOME TIME IN MAY), HE SAYS HIS APPETITE  
IS EXCELLENT AND HIS ENERGY LEVEL IS FULLY RETURNED. HE  
TALKED AT SOME LENGTH ABOUT THE "DISGUSTING ATTACKS" FROM  
THE OPPOSITION ABOUT HIS HEALTH AND ALLEGED MENTAL INCAPACITY,

CITING HISTORICAL CASES LIKE FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT'S TO DEMONSTRATE HOW FAR THE ISRAELI PRESS AND OPPOSITION HAD STOOPED TO VIOLATE ACCEPTED TABOOS IN POLITICS. HE TALKED AT SOME LENGTH ABOUT HIS RECENT INTERVIEWS ON FACE THE NATION AND NBC TELEVISION, ADMITTING THAT HE HAD DONE LESS WELL ON FACE THE NATION BECAUSE OF HIS ANGER AT BILL FARRELL'S QUESTION ABOUT HIS HEALTH. HE SAID HE HAD TOLD FARRELL AFTERWARD THAT HE THOUGHT IT WAS UNFAIR TO RAISE THIS KIND OF ISSUE ON TV BEFORE MILLIONS OF VIEWERS. HE RECOUNTED WITH CONSIDERABLE GUSTO HIS PERFORMANCE AT THE KNESSET DEBATE JULY 24, REHEARSING FOR ME HIS CUTTING THRUSTS AT PERES AND OTHERS AND DEMONSTRATING ALL TOO OBVIOUSLY HOW MUCH HE ENJOYS THE PARLIAMENTARY SKIRMISHING IN THE KNESSET WHEN HE IS FEELING WELL ENOUGH TO TAKE PART. HE CERTAINLY SHOWED NO INDICATION THAT HE BELIEVED HE HAD GONE BEYOND A NORMAL LEVEL OF COMBATIVENESS IN THE DEBATE.

2. AFTER WE GOT OVER ALL OF THESE PRELIMINARIES, I TOOK THE MOMENT TO TELL HIM SOMETHING ABOUT THE ADMIRABLE EFFORTS HERMANN EILTS HAS BEEN MAKING WITH SADAT AND KAMEL (REF B) TO CURB THE PERSONAL SLANDER AGAINST BEGIN APPEARING SO REGULARLY NOW IN THE EGYPTIAN PRESS. HE WAS "VERY GRATEFUL" FOR EILTS' EFFORTS, AND ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THE SLANDEROUS LANGUAGE WAS HAVING ITS EFFECTS ON HIS VIEW OF SADAT AND THE PEACE PROCESS. HE SAID PROUDLY THAT HE HAD REFRAINED THUS FAR FROM INDULGING IN ANY PERSONAL ATTACKS AGAINST SADAT HIMSELF,

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SINCE HE BELIEVED THIS KIND OF EXCHANGE WAS ONLY HARMFUL TO THE PEACE PROSPECTS. BUT, HE SAID, "I DONT KNOW HOW MUCH LONGER I WILL RESTRAIN MYSELF IF THIS SORT OF THING GOES ON."

3. I THEN GAVE BEGIN A FEW PERSONAL IMPRESSIONS OF MY OWN FROM THE LEEDS CASTLE TALKS, PRIMARILY COMMENDING DAYAN FOR THE WAY IN WHICH HE HAD PRESENTED THE ISRAELI POSITION. BEGIN OBVIOUSLY HAD A FAVORABLE IMPRESSION OF THE LEEDS CASTLE TALKS FROM HIS READING OF THE TRANSCRIPT OF THE MEETINGS, AND HIS EXPECTATIONS FOR THE NEXT PHASE OF NEGOTIATIONS WERE CORRESPONDINGLY HOPEFUL. HE SAID HE WAS LOOKING FORWARD TO MEETING WITH ROY ATHERTON THE NEXT AFTERNOON TO GO MORE INTO DETAIL.

4. I THEN REVIEWED FOR BEGIN THE SCENARIO AS IT PRESENTLY STANDS FOR THE SECRETARY'S TRIP TO THE MIDDLE EAST, FOLLOWING THE POINTS IN PARA TWO OF REF A. BEGIN WAS FULLY IN AGREEMENT WITH THAT SCENARIO. HE PLANS TO BE ON VACATION IN THE TEL AVIV AREA BEGINNING AUGUST 4, BUT SAID HE WOULD BE HAPPY TO MEET WITH VANCE AND HIS PARTY AT THE PLACE WHERE HE WILL BE VACATIONING ON SUNDAY AND MONDAY, AUG 6-7. (FOR SECURITY REASONS, LOCALE OF BEGIN'S VACATION SITE IS BEING VERY CLOSELY KEPT HERE FOR TIME BEING AND SHOULD NOT BE DISCUSSED.) BEGIN

WAS PLEASED AT PROSPECT OF SFM MEETING FOR PORTIONS OF THREE DAYS, AND AT OUR ASSURANCE THAT SECRETARY'S PARTY WILL ARRIVE WELL AFTER END OF SHABBAT ON SATURDAY, AUG 5 (8:45 PM). I CAUTIONED BEGIN STRONGLY THAT WE HAD FURTHER DIPLOMATIC WORK TO DO WITH SADAT IN ORDER TO PIN DOWN THE SFM MEETING. IN THE MEANTIME, I SAID WE WOULD VERY MUCH APPRECIATE HIS KEEPING THE PLANS FOR THE SFM MEETINGS QUIET SO AS NOT TO COMPLICATE OUR PROBLEMS IN CAIRO. HE PROMISED TO DO SO.

5. I HAD NOT SEEN BEGIN SINCE JUST BEFORE MY DEPARTURE FOR LEEDS, AND I WAS STRUCK BY NOT ONLY HIS PHYSICAL REJUVENATION BUT ALSO HIS AIR OF AUTHORITY AND SELF-CONFIDENCE, WHICH HAD BEEN MARKEDLY MISSING DURING MUCH OF MAY AND JUNE. THIS UNDOUBTEDLY MAKES HIM A MORE FORMIDABLE DEBATING OPPONENT IN THE KNESSET

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FOR THE OPPOSITION, BUT I THINK IT ALSO HAS SOME BENEFITS FOR US IN THE NEGOTIATIONS, SINCE HE SEEMS TO HAVE REGAINED AT LEAST FOR THE MOMENT A CERTAIN INTELLECTUAL FORCE WHICH WILL PERMIT HIM TO PARTICIPATE MORE CREATIVELY, IF OF COURSE HE CHOOSES TO DO SO, IN THE NEXT PHASE. LEWIS

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NNN

## Message Attributes

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